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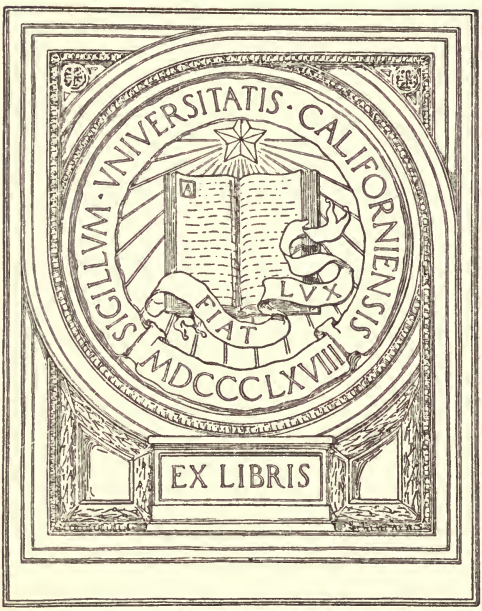
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"WHAT I KNOW ABOUT"

HORACE GREELEY'S

SECESSION, WAR AND DIPLOMATIC

RECORD.

A LETTER WRITTEN (NOT PUBLISHED) IN 1870,

BY

THURLOW WEED

TO

THOMAS C. ACTON.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK:
JAMES McGEE, PRINTER, 647 BROADWAY.
1872.

FRED LOCKLEY
RARE WESTERN BOOKS
4227 S. E. Stark St.
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The letter which is herewith submitted to the public containing Mr. WEED's reasons in declining to vote for Mr. GREELEY when a candidate for State Comptroller in 1867, and in again withholding his vote from GREELEY when a candidate for Congress in 1870, will, it is believed, attract general attention and approval. It is a calm review of Mr. GREELEY's teachings and movements preceding and during Secession and Rebellion. Mr. GREELEY, is held largely responsible not only for Rebellion, but for the millions of treasure and the rivers of blood which it cost. The evidence adduced in justification of these charges is drawn from the editorial columns of the *Tribune*; and so conclusive is this evidence that no patriotic elector will fail to find in Mr. WEED's letter abundant reason for now withholding his vote from Mr. GREELEY, as a candidate for President of the United States.

New York, Oct. 10, 1870.

Dear Sir:—A year ago you made an earnest appeal for my vote in favor of Mr. Greeley for State Comptroller. Assuming that I had strong personal reasons for refusing to vote for Mr. Greeley, you urged very properly that these should yield to public considerations. I readily acquiesced in this view of the question, and resolved to govern my action in accordance with it. I calmly examined the relative qualifications of the two candidates. Mr. Greeley had been educated a printer, and had devoted himself exclusively to his profession. He had, therefore, no knowledge or experience in the duties of the office of Comptroller. Nor were his talents, his habits or his tastes adapted to financial duties. The idea that the editor of a leading daily journal could so divide his time between New York and Albany as to discharge the duties of Comptroller in addition to those of the editor, seemed to me not only impossible, but preposterous. It is scarcely necessary to say what is so generally known, that the office of Comptroller is altogether the most important, laborious and responsible in the State. I have personally known its incumbents for considerably more than half a century. Among them were Archibald McIntyre, John Savage, William L. Marcy, Silas Wright, Jr., Azariah C. Flagg, John A. Collier, Millard Fillmore, Washington Hunt, Philo C. Fuller, James M. Cook, Thomas Hillhouse, etc., etc., all men distinguished for ability and industry, not one of whom ever attempted to attend to any other business, and all of whom found constant and full occupation, physical and mental, in the discharge of their public duties. Without, therefore, recognizing other and strong reasons for withholding my vote for Mr. Greeley, I considered those which I have stated quite sufficient.

In his opponent, William F. Allen, I found a capable

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and enlightened man, with some experience, much industry, and peculiar fitness for the duties of that office. I had known him first as an able and useful member of our Legislature, and next as an eminently upright Judge. My only difficulty, therefore, in deciding to vote for Mr. Allen was that he was a Democrat, and a nominee of the Democratic party. But this objection was obviated in my mind by the fact—a fact well known to both political parties—that from the beginning of the Rebellion in 1861, to the end of the war in 1865, Judge Allen was an avowed, earnest, active War Democrat, and this rendered it easy to cast my vote, as I did, in favor of William F. Allen for Comptroller. I may add that, in subsequently voting for Mr. Allen for Judge of the Court of Appeals, my only regret was that at a time of almost universal official demoralization the State would lose the services of a fearless and incorruptible Comptroller.

Mr. Greeley now turns up as a candidate for Congress from the district in which I reside. You again urge me to vote for him, and I have taken the subject into calm and serious consideration. Lifting my thoughts above all things merely personal, I have endeavored to ascertain whether Mr. Greeley, upon public grounds, is entitled to my vote. Having reached the conclusion that I cannot vote for Mr. Greeley, I will give you my reasons —reasons which constitute, in my own judgment, a perfect justification—reasons which ought to deprive him of the vote of every loyal elector in the district.

Mr. Greeley, for several months before the Rebellion, while that question was rife in the Southern States, was an avowed, earnest, and persistent secessionist. As the editor of a leading and widely circulating Republican journal, he exerted an influence at once powerful and malign. Indeed, but for that influence it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to have withdrawn North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia from the Union. To show you that I do not state this point too strongly, let me refresh your memory with editorial extracts from the *Tribune:*

(*From the Tribune of November* 9, 1860.)

"If the Cotton States shall become satisfied they can "do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting "them go in peace. The right to secede may be a revolu- "tionary one, but it exists nevertheless. When any con- "siderable section of our Union shall deliberately resolve "to go out we shall resist all coercive measures designed "to keep it in. We hope never to live in a Republic "where one section is pinned to the other by bayonets."

(*From the Tribune, November* 26, 1860.)

"If the Cotton States, unitedly and earnestly, wish to "withdraw peacefully from the Union, we think they "should and would be allowed to go. Any attempt to "compel them by force to remain would be contrary to the "principles enunciated in the immortal Declaration of "Independence, contrary to the fundamental ideas on "which human liberty is based."

(*From the Tribune of December* 17, 1860).

"If (the Declaration of Independence) justified the "secession from the British Empire of three millions of col- "onists in 1776, we do not see why it would not justify "the secesession of five millions of Southrons from the "Union in 1861."

(*From the Tribune of February* 23, 1861.)

"*Whenever it shall be clear that the great body of the "Southern people have become conclusively alienated "from the Union, and anxious to escape from it, we "will do our best to forward their views.*"

Such was the language of Mr. Greeley, and such the teachings of the *Tribune* during the autumn and winter of 1860–1861, while secession and rebellion were at work in severing the Union, and while States like stars were dropping out of their orbits. A Governor of South Carolina in urging that State to inaugurate treason informed his hearers that the New York *Tribune* had openly declared that the Southern States had as clear a right to rebel against the Federal Government as the thirteen States in 1776 had to rebel against the Government of George the Third, adding that, "in this emerg- "ency our worst enemies have become our best friends."

The State of Georgia held out long and manfully against the traitors in its legislature who advocated the Ordinance of Secession, but finally and reluctantly broke from its moorings when Robert J. Toombs, in one of his vehement speeches, produced and read from the New York *Tribune*, the articles from which I have now made brief extracts. You will see, therefore, that Mr. Greeley invited and encouraged the Southern States to go out of the Union; that he promised them aid and comfort; and that he denied the right of the Federal Government to interfere. Why, then, is he not, up to the breaking out of the war, as obnoxious a secessionist as Jefferson Davis, or Senators Mason and Slidell? Indeed, if there be any difference, Davis, Mason and Slidell occupy vantage ground, for Mr. Greeley has not the excuse of being a Southern man.

When the war commenced Mr. Greeley arrogantly assumed the right to dictate a policy for the Administration, and to command the Army. Long before the President, Secretary of War, or the Commander-in-Chief of the Army deemed it prudent to make a forward movement, Mr. Greeley issued and reiterated in the *Tribune*, his well remembered and ominous order of "On to Richmond." And such was its power over the minds of an impulsive people and an impatient Congress, that, wholly unprepared as we were, our army was prematurely forced into a disastrous battle. For that cruel slaughter of our undisciplined troops, and for that humiliation to our Government and people, Mr. Greeley, in a remorseful moment confessed himself "greatly to blame."

Subsequently, during the darkest days of the Rebellion, and especially when our armies were defeated, or at bay, the *Tribune* either howled for peace, or teemed with denunciations against the President or the Army Commanders. In the gloomy Autumn of 1862, Mr. Greeley headed a radical raid upon the President in favor of an Abolition Cabinet. Wendell Phillips, who was brought to New York to further that movement, made the leading speech. After expressing his belief that "Lincoln him-

"self is as honest as a man born in Kentucky can be," said :—"But I have no confidence in the counsels about "him. I have no confidence in the views of your son of "New York, who stands at his right hand to guide the "vessel of State in this tremendous storm." In the same speech Mr. Phillips said, that in "December 1860, James "Buchanan wrote a message to Congress which he sub- "mitted to William H. Seward, and from that time to "the 4th of March, 1861, no fortnight passed that he "did not consult your New York Senator in regard to "the policy of the Government." "If the history of the "closing months is written over with treason, I say that "the Secretary of State (Seward) has his share of the "responsibility."

Mr. Greeley who knew that this charge of treason against Mr. Seward was utterly untrue, made himself tacitly responsible for the calumny by following his leader with a brief speech, so cold and icy as to dishearten all the timid, and to awaken the indignation of all the earnest friends of the Union. Mr. Greeley came forward and said :—"Fellow Citizens : when this struggle commenced, "I think I was not as gay and as sanguine as some of "you were. I did not believe if we had a Civil War at "all, it could be a little war. I did believe, and I believe "now, it might have been made a little war by striking "so soon, and striking so strongly, that it would not have "been a Civil War at all. We are now in the midst of "this war. I do not see the immediate result of the war. "I am not sanguine that under the leaders we have, the "management we have, an immediate triumph is at "all certain. We may have that, we are more likely "not to have that."

Returning from Cooper Institute, where Messrs. Phillips and Greeley were delivered of speeches, to the *Tribune* office, Mr. Greeley complacently issues the following comprehensive edict :

"1. Reorganize the cabinet, and compose it of seven of "the ablest and most loyal men in the whole country— "men who thoroughly believe in the war, and who do not

"believe that loyal Americans ought to be treated as "chattels.

"2. Dismiss from the service every officer who persists "in cavilling at, and exciting hostilities to the policy of "the Government.

"3. Stop the coast survey, and shut up the West Point "Academy.

"4. Call out the uniform militia of the loyal States for "three months, and employ them to garrison Washing- "ton, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Louisville.

"Such are our notions of the war. We cannot doubt "that our soldiers will speedily put down the rebellion, "if our generals will but let them."

During the progress of the war none were more jubilant over our successes than Mr. Greeley, but when reverses came his croaking voice was heard in shrill and discordant demands for peace. At a time when a series of discouraging defeats had occasioned intense solicitude, when Southern Traitors and Northern Copperheads were rejoicing in the prospect of the destruction of our Government, Mr. Greeley, in a double-leaded editorial, said:

"IF AFTER SIXTY DAYS MORE HARD FIGHTING THE ENEMY "IS NOT BEATEN, IT WILL BECOME THE DUTY OF THE GOV- "ERNMENT TO MAKE PEACE ON THE BEST ATTAIN- "ABLE TERMS."

Thus encouraged and stimulated by this *cowardly* demand for peace by the leading Republican journal, the enemy prosecuted the war with renewed confidence and vigor.

Soon after this gratuitous, ill-timed and insolent demand for peace, Mr. Greeley, at the suggestion of a muddle-headed adventurer (Colorado Jewett), obtained the President's consent that he might make a peace pilgrimage to Canada, where George N. Sanders and other traitors were hatching conspiracies and raids. With these congenial spirits he was so much pleased that he reproached Mr. Lincoln for not confiding to him the power "of making peace upon the best attainable terms." And with Mr. Greeley were the conspirators so much charmed

that, one of them (C. C. Clay) drew up a call for a public meeting in the city of New York, commending Mr. Greeley for his patriotic and laudable efforts to negotiate a peace. That call was sent to New York by G. W. McLean, but fell into the hands of Richard Schell, a loyal Democrat, "who took the responsibility" of suppressing it.

Jewett's letter to Mr. Greeley ran as follows:

"NIAGARA FALLS, July 5, 1864.

"*My dear Mr. Greeley:*—In reply to your note I have "to advise, having just left Hon. George N. Sanders, of "Kentucky, on the Canada side, I am authorized to state "to you, for our use only—not the public—that the am-"bassadors of Davis & Co. are now in Canada with full "and complete powers for a peace. And Mr. Sanders re-"quests that you come on immediately to me at the Cat-"aract House, to have a private interview, or if you will "send the President's protection for him and two friends, "they will come on and meet you. He says the whole "matter can be consummated by me, you, them, and "President Lincoln.

"Yours, W. C. JEWETT."

With no other or better reason or authority than this letter Mr. Greeley immediately assumed the language and authority of a diplomatist, and wrote a long, suggestive, pregnant letter to the President, of which the following is an extract:—

"NEW YORK, July 7, 1864.

"I venture to enclose to you a letter and telegraphic "dispatch which I received yesterday from our irrepress-"ible friend, Colorado Jewett, at Niagara Falls. I think "they deserve attention, as evidencing the anxiety of "the Confederates everywhere for peace, and, therefore, "I venture to remind you that our bleeding, bankrupt, "almost dying country which longs for peace—shudders at "the prospect of fresh conscriptions, of further whole-"sale devastations, and of new rivers of human blood; "and a wide-spread conviction that the Government and "its prominent supporters are not anxious for peace, and "do not improve proffered opportunities to achieve it, is "doing great harm now, etc. etc." (Page 572, Raymond's

" Life of Lincoln.) " Do not, I entreat you, fail to make " the Southern people comprehend that you and all of " us are anxious for peace, and prepared to grant liberal terms.

" Mr. President, I fear that you do not realize how in- " tently the people desire any peace, consistent with the " national integrity and honor, and how joyfully they " would hail its achievement and bless its authors.

" Yours truly,

" HORACE GREELEY.

" Hon. A. Lincoln, President, Washington, D. C."

Accompanying this letter was Mr. Greeley's plan of adjustment, in which he proposed to pay four hundred million dollars, which sum was to be apportioned *pro rata* among the Slave States, and placed at the absolute disposal of their respective legislatures. In a subsequent letter, Mr. Greeley informed the President that Clement C. Clay, of Alabama, and Jacob Thompson, of Mississippi, were the Peace Commissioners referred to. Before the bubble burst, the following letter was received from Sanders :—

" Clifton House, Niagara Falls, C. W.,
" July 12, 1864.

" *Dear Sir :*—I am authorized to say that the Hon. " Clement C. Clay, of Alabama, Professor James P. Hol- " combe, of Virginia, and George N. Sanders of Dixie, " are ready and willing to go at once to Washington, " upon complete and unqualified protection being given " either by the President or Secretary of War. Let the " permission include the three names and one other.

" Very Respectfully,

" GEORGE N. SANDERS.

" Hon. Horace Greeley."

To Mr. Greeley's importunities Mr. Lincoln finally yielded, and in a letter to Mr. G. said :—

" If you can find any person, anywhere, professing " to have any proposition of Jefferson Davis in writing " for peace, embracing the restoration of the Union and " the abandonment of slavery, say to him, he may come " to me with you, and that he shall have safe conduct to " the point where you shall have met him ; the same if " there be two or more persons."

That, however, did not satisfy Mr. Greeley, who required something more definite, and Mr. Lincoln after another letter, in which he said :—"I not only intend a "sincere effort for peace, but I intend that you shall be "a personal witness that it is made," sent his Secretary to New York, with an authority to guarantee the safety of Mr. Greeley's Confederate friends in their proposed journey to Washington and back. In accordance with that authority, Mr. Greeley departed for Canada, with the following order in his pocket :—

"The Executive Mansion, Washington, D. C.

"The President of the United States directs that the "four persons whose names follow, *i. e.* the Hon. Clement "C. Clay, the Hon. Jacob Thompson, Professor James "B. Holcombe, and George N. Sanders, shall have safe "conduct to the City of Washington, in company with "the Hon. Horace Greeley, and shall be exempt from "arrest and annoyance of any kind from any officer of "the United States during their journey to the said city "of Washington.

"By order of the President.

"John Hay, Major and A. A. G."

On his arrival in Canada, Mr. Greeley despatched Colorado Jewett with a letter to the Confederates, informing them that he had an order from the President guaranteeing their protection, and inviting them to accompany him to Washington. Whereupon the mountain proved to be a mole hill.

To Mr. Greeley's letter enclosing the President's protection Messrs. Clay and Holcombe replied, expressing their "regret that the safe conduct of the President of "the United States has been tendered us under some mis-"apprehension of facts. We are not accredited to him "from Richmond as bearers of propositions looking to the "establishment of peace ; but we feel authorized to de-"clare that, if the circumstances disclosed in this corres-"pondence were communicated to Richmond, we would "be at once invested with the authority to which your "letter refers. We respectfully solicit, through your in-

" tervention, a safe conduct to Washington, and thence " by any route which may be designated, through your " lines to Richmond. We would be gratified if Mr. " George Sanders was embraced in this privilege."

Any other man but Mr. Greeley, on finding himself thus duped and trifled with, would have thrown up his diplomatic sponge. But Mr. Greeley would "not " give it up so." He accordingly sent a telegram to the President, admitting that he did not find the gentlemen referred to so empowered as he was previously assured, and forwarding their request for the President's safe conduct, to Richmond.

To this telegram the President responded as follows :—

" Executive Mansion, Washington, July 18, 1864.

" To Whom it may Concern :—

" Any proposition which embraces the restoration of " peace, the integrity of the whole Union, and the aban- " donment of Slavery, and which comes by and with an " authority that can control the armies now at war " against the United States, will be received and con- " sidered by the Executive Government of the United " States, and will be met by liberal terms on substantial " and collateral points, and the bearer or bearers thereof " shall have safe conduct both ways.

" (Signed), ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

To this offer of the President, the Confederate agents replied in a long letter to Mr. Greeley, from which the following is an extract :—

" If there is any citizen of the Confederate States who " has clung to a hope that peace was possible with this " administration of the Federal Government, it will strip " from their eyes the last film of such a delusion ; or if " there be any whose hearts have grown faint under the " suffering and agony of this bloody struggle it will in- " spire them with fresh energy to endure and bear what- " ever may be requisite to preserve to themselves and " children all that gives dignity and value to life, or hope " or consolation to death. And if there be any patriots " or Christians in your land who shrink appalled from the " illimitable vista of private misery and public calamity

"which stretches before them, we pray that in their "bosoms a resolution will be quickened to recall the "abused authority and vindicate the outraged civilization "of their country."

And here, for the time being, ended Mr. Greeley's miserable Quixotic negotiations with George N. Sanders, Jake Thompson, etc., etc., for peace. Mr. Greeley, however, left Canada with friendly feelings for the conspirators whose last letter to him expressed the hope that our people would "recall" the "authority" which President Lincoln had "abused;" and we have George Sander's authority for saying, that Mr. Greeley expressed his regret that President Lincoln's conduct had not been that of a gentleman. Sanders is not a witness on whose veracity I should rely; but it is well known that Mr. Greeley was highly exasperated with the President.

After Mr. Lincoln had been renominated in 1864 by the National Republican Convention, Mr. Greeley led a movement in favor of a radical Convention at Cleveland, Ohio, for the purpose of nominating a third candidate. He wrote private letters to leading Republicans in New England, urging them to join in this movement, a movement which could have no other effect than to surrender the Government of the Union into the hands of its enemies. This movement, in its design and purpose, was identical with that which brought Breckenridge into the canvass of 1860. The disunionists of that day nominated Breckenridge for the purpose of defeating Douglas. The Radicals of 1864 nominated Fremont for the purpose of defeating Lincoln. Both of these movements were treasonable. The first because it contemplated rebellion—and the last, because in the midst of war it sought the overthrow of a loyal administration, and as a consequence, the triumph of the candidates of a Copperhead organization. When the war was finally over; when a peace had been achieved—not by the cowardly croakings of the *Tribune*, nor the officious or ill-omened negotiations of Messrs. Greeley and Blair, but by the gallantry of Grant, Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan, Farragut

Porter, and the courage and fidelity of the soldiers and sailors under their command—Mr. Greeley, faithful to his promise to those whom he had inveigled into secession, rushed to Richmond for the purpose of releasing Jefferson Davis from imprisonment. Simultaneously he proclaimed universal amnesty for rebels, *including those who had conspired to burn New York, to introduce contagion into our cities, and to assassinate our President.* He also wrote to Mr. Breckenridge, if not to other exiled traitors, inviting them to return to a country which they had deluged in blood, and to enjoy the protection of a Government which they had endeavored to destroy.

This is a truthful record of Mr. Greeley's sentiments, sympathies and actions on the questions of secession, rebellion, and war. It is shown clearly that he exerted a powerful influence in aid of secession; that he precipitated the disastrous battle of Bull Run; that he protracted the war and encouraged the enemy by reiterated and cowardly demands for peace; that he released Jeff. Davis from imprisonment—and urged universal amnesty, so that Breckenridge, Slidell, Mason, etc. etc., may be restored to their seats in the Senate of the United States, seats which they abandoned to engage in a treasonable war against the Government and Union. For how many millions of treasure and how many thousands of lives Mr. Greeley is responsible, I will not undertake to say. But I will say that, while these undeniable facts are fresh in my memory, he will not receive my vote.

And now, after a few words in relation to Mr. Greeley's fitness for legislative duties, I will bring this long letter to a close. The act of our legislature authorizing the call of a Convention to amend our Constitution, contained a provision which secured the election of thirty delegates by a practically unanimous vote. Its object was to secure the services of fifteen of the ablest and most experienced men in either of the two great political parties of our State. Mr. Greeley engineered the Republican State Convention, and, although urged to place on the ticket such men as Francis Granger, Hamilton Fish, George W.

Patterson, Alexander S. Johnson, John K. Porter, Charles P. Kirkland, Edward Dodd, John A. Kennedy, Richard P. Marvin, etc., several of whom had been enlightened members of the third Constitutional Convention, he refused to do so, preferring as colleagues, for the most part, a very different class of men. Mr. Greeley had often in conversation expressed a desire to be a delegate in such a convention, believing, as he said, that his services would be useful to the people. In that convention there was a decided majority of Republicans. Mr. Greeley, therefore, found himself with congenial associations and surroundings, but the first few days disclosed the fact that Mr. Greeley was out of his element. He thrust impracticable propositions prematurely upon the Convention, propositions which found little favor with men who had taken their seats with the greatest admiration for, and the highest confidence in the Editor of the *Tribune*. Mr. Greeley soon lost his temper, and long before the Convention brought its abortive labors to a conclusion he gathered up his effects, and pronouncing an unclerical benediction upon his colleagues, he left the capitol. The result was that, instead of framing a wise and beneficent Constitution, so much needed by the changed condition and circumstances of our State and people, several months were lost in discordant views and profitless debates, resulting finally in the production of an instrument that was rejected by the electors. That failure, for which Mr. Greeley is so largely responsible, added nearly half a million of dollars to our State debt.

If, therefore, I have shown that Mr. Greeley's secession and war records are disloyal and cowardly, and that his unfitness for representative duties was mischievously apparent in our Constitutional Convention, you will not, I feel assured, complain of my second refusal to vote for him. My Congressional vote will be given to James W. Booth, who, though not a candidate, is a Republican of unquestioned loyalty and patriotism.

Very truly yours,

THURLOW WEED.

Hon. Thomas C. Acton.

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